

## How Do You Spell Love?

1/29/23

Put forth the Effort | Colossians 3:18-23

Sunday AM

Have you heard about the couple who desperately missed their kids and longed for them to visit? Problem was, their successful, busy kids lived far away. So, trying to figure out a way to see them w/out guilting them, the husband took the bull by the horns. First, he called his son in NY and told him that after 40 yrs, he's decided he can't tolerate the boy's mom any longer – so, he's filing for divorce. Of course, the distraught son told his dad he was going to call his sister w/ the news. Well, his sister overseas took the news hard and said she was getting on the next flight to fly home. So, the son called his dad back and begged him to not do anything until they arrived. After hanging up, the man turned to his wife and said, "Well, it's taken care of – the kids will be home tomorrow."

**Lesson** – All life takes is a little effort/ingenuity.

Over the past few weeks, we've been using the acrostic – T.I.M.E. to help us learn *how to spell love!* Two weeks ago, we talked about investing in the *essentials*, and then last week, we discussed managing realistic *expectations*. Today, I want to spend a few min. talking about putting in the *effort*.

**Effort** is nothing more than giving someone/thing the necessary energy/exertion necessary to make it work.

It's like the husband who was told by a friend he should romantically surprise his wife. So, one day, he came home from work, dressed in a suit, w/ flowers in one hand and candy in the other. He rang the doorbell and waited... When his wife opened the door, she immediately burst into tears. B/w sobs she said, "I can't believe it! Little Mary's throwing up, the washer just broke, your parents are coming this weekend – and to top it all off, you've come home drunk!"

Well... at least the guy got an "A" for effort.

*Whenever I think of effort*, I think of my grandpa who often said – *you only get out of life what you're willing to put into it.* **He'd then explain** – (1) we each must take responsibility for our own actions/words; (2) we each must take responsibility for our circumstances no matter how we find ourselves in them; (3) we each must put in the necessary effort/work to succeed in life – b/c nothing in life happens by chance.

*I think this is especially true w/in the family.* Whether as spouses, parents, or siblings – family requires hard work and tireless effort – and a ton of patience.

As I've pondered/prayed over the **idea of effort** w/in the home, a number of verses have come to mind relevant to putting forth the right kind of effort to make a marriage/family work. In particular, today, I want to consider how Galatians 6:6-10 applies to the family as it says – *we will all reap what we sow.*

*Don't be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows – and whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; while whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. So, let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.* Galatians 6:7-10

Oh... the dreaded **law of sowing/reaping** – which most people think doesn't apply to them – but it does.

**Note how Paul begins** – *do not be deceived* – b/c apparently, some people seem to think if you plant *corn* you can reap *apples*, or if you plant *evil* you can reap *good*, or if you *deny/defy* God somehow you can still harvest His *favor* – but that's not how it works.

**The same idea applies to families.** Some people think they can ignore God's precepts on marriage/family and yet somehow, miraculously reap something better.

**do not be deceived** – put in the effort to not wander off or be led astray b/c you buy into a lie either from yourself or from others.

**Just this week** – I was listening to the radio and the DJ commented that we're now living in a *post-truth society*. Now, I've heard the terms *post-modern* and *post-Christian*, but *post-truth* was a new concept.

A **post-truth worldview** speaks of someone who's chosen to accept an argument as true based on their emotions, ideologies, and opinions rather than on fact.

**Talk about** a terrifying notion. For not only does truth become relative to the individual, it also becomes irrelevant to the whole. **Meaning** – what's true for me might not be true for you – yet, since my truth is more important than your truth, I have a moral right and obligation to do whatever it takes to squelch/silence your truth whether you like it or not.

I think this is what Paul is warning of in Galatians 6 – being deceived by any idea that affords people the occasion to live as an imbecile ignoring God's truth.

While this idea is occurring in every facet of life, the notion that anything goes is destroying the family.

There's a litany of false ideas about marriage/family being propagated from Hollywood to too many pulpits – attacking the Biblical idea of marriage/family.

**Think about it** – when/what was the last show about the family that had any sort of sound Biblical truth?

Have you seen the new TV show that puts 12 families under the microscope of how to best parent? On the **Parent Test** – they offer parenting examples ranging from *helicopter* parenting to *child-led* parenting – using all kinds of modern families to teach parenting.

**Point** – it doesn't matter the topic or facet of life – *God has offered a plan concerning marriage/family that's currently juxtaposed to the ideas/opinions of culture.*

I'm reminded of Paul's words in Romans 12:2 – *do not allow yourself to be stuffed into the mold of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds...*

**WHY?** It's b/c the way of the world more often than not, runs in the opposite direction of God's way leading to an earthly and eternal dead end.

Unite this truth w/ the truth of sowing/reaping and the result is NOT good. Whether we're talking about family life, work life, or spiritual life – God wants us to understand that *we can only reap what we sow* – and thus, ***there will be a payday someday.***

Sooner or later in life, we all sit down at a banquet table of consequences. *Robert Louis Stevenson*

Now, I'm not saying Christians have cornered the market on marriage/family – or that at times, even the family who ignores God's Word doesn't incidentally apply God's truths in their home. What I'm saying is that God's way is the best way and it won't be mocked.

**mocked** – (only here in NT) from the root *nose* – as in *to thumb your nose at someone*. In this case, it refers to thinking we can ignore God and He won't mind. Listen carefully – GOD MINDS! B/c God cares!

**Paul is saying** – you may think you can fool *all* of the people *some* of the time, or *some* of the people *all* of the time, but you'll never fool God at any time. And the reason is b/c God cares so much for each of us that He has put a law into the universe that's as certain as gravity – you will reap what you sow.

**Our effort matters.** The principles/precepts we apply to life make all the difference in the world. **DYK** that *your daily decisions will either bring life/death*.

This was the idea Paul was speaking of in Romans 7 – when he was talking about his struggles w/ his flesh.

*I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there w/ me. For in my inner being, I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work w/in me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this **body that is subject to death**? Thanks be to God, who delivers me thru Jesus Christ our Lord!*

This is one of those times when knowing the depth of the phrase magnifies the truth – *this body that's subject to death...* refers to **strapping death to yourself**.

**As you're likely aware**, the Romans were known for their brutality towards a condemned criminal. Those who'd committed crimes against the empire were crucified, naked on a cross to be humiliated/mockered.

Those who killed their parents faced the punishment of *poena cullei* – which included being beaten, bound, and then tied into a large sack w/ a dog, viper, monkey, or chicken – to be thrown into a river to drown.

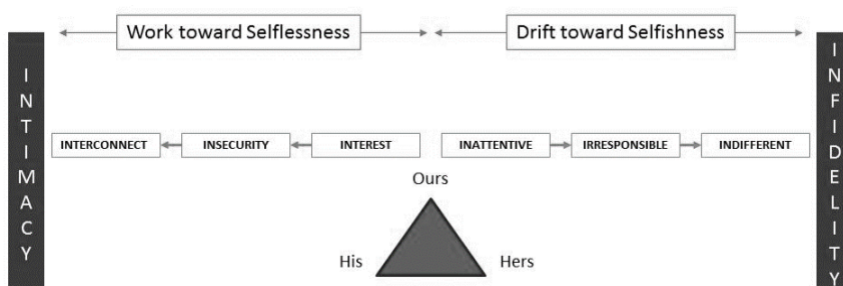
**DYK** – there was an even worse punishment reserved for the worst of the worst – it was the unimaginable penalty of having to carry dead weight. For the worst offenders, the Romans took a maggot-infested corpse and strapped it to the bare back of a criminal, and then force the criminal to ferry this decomposing carcass around until they succumbed to the toxins in a very slow, painful, stench-filled death.

**Now** – why would I refer to such a disgusting thing? For the same reason Paul did in Romans 7:24 – b/c when we choose to operate in the flesh in opposition to God, instead of walking in the Spirit, we're choosing to **strap death** to ourselves. **Meaning** – when we choose to operate in our flesh in our marriages and homes, we're strapping death to our homes.

**Like when** – we carry around disdain, bitterness, resentment, or any number of other rotting attitudes – and b/c of an inability to forgive, we're strapping death to ourselves (and to those around us) allowing this poison to leak into our lives/families to slowly kill us.

This is the relevance of EFFORT. Life requires hard work/intentionality to thrive b/c we only reap what we're sowing – *you only get out what you put into it*.

This leads me to the *Intimacy Spectrum* I alluded to in last week's teaching.



No matter the relationship, whether w/ God or a person – every relationship requires effort, or else it'll drift. This is especially true w/ husbands/wives and w/ parents/kids. We're either working towards intimacy (into-me-you-see) or we're drifting to infidelity (unfaithfulness to one's commitment).

**To work towards intimacy** – we must walk thru the doors of *interests, insecurity, and interconnectedness*, whereas, to drift to infidelity, we only have to become *inattentive, irresponsible, and indifferent*.

**In a family**, it's hard work to remain interested in each other's lives and to not take our spouses/kids/parents for granted as *familiarity often breeds complacency*.

**To move to intimacy**, we have to open up and become transparent. See – in opening our hearts/lives to others, we're arming them w/ our deepest, most honest feelings, hopes, and experiences to connect w/ them in interdependence – which leads to intimacy.

So, where do we begin? As we've discussed for the past 2-weeks, as God's children, in some manner – it begins w/ our relationship w/ God. Look at 2 Peter 2:3f

*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life thru our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory/goodness. Thru these, He has given us His great/precious promises, so that thru them you may participate in His divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this reason alone, **make every effort** to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective/unproductive in your life w/ our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they've been cleansed from their past sins.*

It begins w/ connecting w/ Jesus as our Savior – and then deciding to plug into His power thru the abiding life. When we do, God gives us everything we need for life/godliness. But notice – we have to put in the effort to add to our faith goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, affection, and love.

**This is what we are culpable to do.** Colossians 3 says this requires setting our hearts/minds on things above. Hebrews 12 calls us to fix our eyes on Jesus. While in Matthew 6, Jesus calls us to seek first God's kingdom.

**No matter the description** – the effort is the same. We're all to make the effort to surrender to God, by coming under the influence of the H.S. as we align to obey God's Word so God can move in/thru our lives.

Let me be even more practical – Philippians 4:4-9:

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I'll say it again – rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all that the Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, w/ thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ. Finally, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. And whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice – and the God of peace will be w/ you.*

**rejoice** – daily allow God to be your source of joy

**don't be anxious but pray** – turn to God not to self

**whatever is** – speaks to focusing on the good/positive

**put into practice** – live what you say you believe

**IOW** – put in the effort to make these truths the guiding priority in yourself and in your family – knowing that God promises His presence/peace will be w/ you.

**In closing**, let me offer a few other suggestions to assist us in putting in the time/effort necessary for our families to survive/thrive.

- 1 – Daily make time to seek intimacy w/ God
- 2 – Weekly make time for God w/in your family
- 3 – Daily unplug from technology to talk about the day
- 4 – Plan at least (1) meal around the table every week
- 5 – Plan a time for family fun at least once a month

**Bottomline** – if we want our family to thrive, then we have to make the effort to be intentionally relational w/ God and w/ each other.